

[Front cover]

[Blank page]

[Blank page]

[Blank page]

J S Bach

Christmas Term 1904

Before proceeding to the consideration of such remarkable phenomena as the works of Handel and J.S. Bach we ought to look back upon the period preceding them, for they could not have achieved their artistic wonders if enterprising composers of preceding generations had not prepared the way for ~~before~~ them. Indeed one may say that the labours of composers all through the seventeenth century were directed to the solutions of artistic problems and the development of artistic methods which should seem to make their achievements possible. Indeed the immense progress which was made in the course of a hundred

As the most serviceable way of looking at the 17th century music historically is as a preparation for Handel and Bach it will be as well to take a look forward and anticipate what the composers of the 17th century prepared for. If we take the main groups of Bach's works we can see better the relation in which the 17th century music stands to them. ~~Most familiar public appreciation covers(?) his Organ works:~~

Organ works: Toccatas, Fantasias, Preludes, Canzonas, Passacaglias, Fugues, Chorale Preludes and Chorale Fantasias. /

Clavier works: Suites, Toccatas and Fugues, The 48 (equal tempered Clavier), Variations. /

Secular works for various instruments: Sonatas V. Cello etc, Concertos (Symphonies with a difference), for Orchestra – and Suites. /

Choral works: Motetts, Church Cantatas, Solo choral music, Passions, Soli Church music, Masses.

All of which are still alive(?) Handel: Operas, Soli Overtures, all mainly dead /

Oratorios, most of them gxxx(?) dead, with 2 or 3 phenomenal exemptions. /

Instrumental Music: Suites, (Organ works of minor(?) importance) Variations - Chaconne.

years is wonderful to see from the infantile ~~experiments~~ efforts of Peri and Caccini, and the crude dramatic experiments of Monteverde, and the ~~archaic~~ somewhat archaic efforts of Schütz in Sacred music and those of the early Organists such as Merulo and Gabriele, to such achievements as Handel's Oratorios and Bach's Passions and Organ music and music for the Clavier. The Italian efforts had been affected by their instinct for mere beauty of form and melody, and throughout the century they had been striving to find solutions to the problems of Opera. First of all it is done(?) by frankly(?) facing the problems of dramatic expression, but latterly by devoting themselves to more organization – like a committee devoting itself first to procedure.

Vitali. G.M. Bononcini b. Modena 1640.

Published his first opus ab. 1665.

G.B. Bassani.

Corelli's works included composed Sonatas of two kinds; Sonata da Chiesa, Sonata da Camera. Suites and Concertos.

and this entailed their expending a great deal of artistic energy in developing harmonic principles as distinguished from contrapuntal principles. That is the type of form which is founded upon the distribution of Tonic and Dominant and the juxtaposition of simple successions of keys as a basis of form ~~instead of such contrapuntal methods~~ such as ultimately served as the basis for Classical Sonatas instead of the contrapuntal methods which are the basis of Fugue. In Opera this resulted in the type which was cultivated in Italy with such success by Alessandro Scarlatti, and in France by Lulli – and in instrumental music by successions of composers who got by degrees nearer to the type of the Sonata and culminated in Corelli 1653-1713. In Sacred music the harmonic tendency was

Carissimi.

We must also keep in mind the important work done by German Composers in the latter part of the 17th century. They devoted themselves much assiduity to writing Church Cantatas in which they followed the Italians in their treatment of solos, and even in much of their choral writing, but improved(?) their work with something more of devotional character(?) and serious feeling. The names of Tunder, Buxtehude, and John Christoph and John Michael Bach naturally occur to us in this connection.

also powerful. Having to write for voices in parts a good deal, composers still maintained something of the contrapuntal type, but an underlying basis of harmonic procedure became more and more apparent, and the contrapuntal texture became secondary – while in solo movements composers more and more approximated to the type of the Operatic aria. The Italians were the leaders in all such things but on the issue(?) of organ music they soon dropped into the second place. They began grandly with Merulo and Frescobaldi, but the harmonic tendency was not favourable in this branch, and the more sterner character of Northern Nations told, and half way through the century, the Northern Organists of Germany and Holland took the lead in the persons first of Sweelinck the Dutchman and later of Froberger, Pachelbel and Buxtehude. By the end of the century certain important types had

[Blank page]

become established. The Italian model of Opera with its ~~its alternation of three or four movement overtures~~ Overtures in three or four little movements (which was the foundation of the little Orchestral Symphony) and the succession of Arias for leading singers alternating with recitatives served as the model on which composers such as Handel, Hasse and hundreds of others worked till the time of Gluck – and the French Opera of quite distinct type ~~in which ballet~~ and which began with the typical French overture which served as the model for overtures to Oratorios till modern times, and the ballets and declamatory passages for solo voices served as the basis of later developments in French Opera. While the ballets exerted an influence on the history of instrumental music, such as Suites. The early type of instrumental Sonata and Suite also became established, and was successfully cultivated by Purcell as well as many great Italian violinists later, the Italians did not pay much attention to music for keyed instruments, as the violin appealed

Froberger.

The Germans did not devote much attention to Clavier music till late – the 17th century. Froberger wrote some wonderful Suites, And Sonatas which are quite chromatic after J.S.B's ~~matter~~ manner. But the lack of interest which the Clavier excited is shown by the admission of Johann Kuhnau that he took to writing for the Clavier mainly on account of its having been so neglected.

much more to their melodic sense. It was not till quite near the end of the century that Sonatas and Suites for keyed instruments began to be written by Northern Composers of whom Johann Kuhnau of Leipzig was foremost. This interesting composer was born in 1660 at Leipzig, became a chorister at Dresden, later Cantor at Zittau, and finally organist of St Thomas's Church in Leipzig and Cantor of the School of St Thomas – therein being J.S.Bach's immediate predecessor. He was a man of high culture and learning and set himself deliberately to make good the neglect of music for the Clavier or Harpsichord. His first venture in this line was a collection of suites which he called 'Neue Klavierübung" which came out in two sets in 1689 and 1695 – to which he appended a preface pointing out the neglect of Clavier music in favour of music

Kuhnau was a man of considerable culture. He studied jurisprudence and Greek and Hebrew and made translations from ~~with~~ those languages.

for violins, and his present essay being an attempt to make it good. It is indeed surprising what a good thing he made of it, considering that he had to adapt a scheme developed for strings to almost new conditions. His manner is mainly contrapuntal and the texture of his work often very much like Bach himself. He went further a few years later, and in 1699 published a collection of 7 Sonatas which he called “fresh fruits of the Klavier” “Frishen Klavier Früchten”, which is on parallel lines to the Sonatas for violins of the Italians, and then in 1700 he brought out one of the curiosities of music, Six Biblical History Sonatas – which are among the

In Gideon see the trumpets and trombones, the flight
of the enemies.

earliest and most curious examples of programme music. The subjects of these are 1. 'The combat of David and Goliath', 2. 'The melancholy of Saul appeased by music', 'Jacobs Marriage', 'the illness of Elizabeth', 'Gideon the servant of the people of Israel', 'Jacob's death and burial'. Though much of the music is ostensibly realistic there is also a lot of artistic development and much of it is quite good music. Of course they must be regarded as more or less absurdities(?) as the resources of art at that time were not sufficiently developed to serve for much in programme music. And the course of the art's progress after Kuhnau's time was decisively in the direction of absolute music as it is called presenting itself in the self dependent suites of Bach and Handel, Domenico Scarlatti's sonatas, and later the sonatas of the classical period. Kuhnau himself died in 1722 and thus made room the great JSB who undoubtedly knew his work and appreciated its appositeness for the Klavier.

NB The great services done by the English Composers of Elizabeth's and James I's time in music for the domestic counterpart to our modern pianoforte. For ~~mainly~~ fully 50 years English composers were ahead of all the rest of the world in this department as they were in Choral Music, and they especially distinguished themselves in developing the style adapted to domestic keyboard instruments, and developing runs and arpeggios and such features which distinguished

Of course while we extend our admiration to Kuhnau we must not forget that our own Purcell and Blow adventured about the same time into the region of Clavier music – and indeed some of Purcell’s is finer than Kuhnau’s, but our curious national isolation prevented Purcell’s work being known, or influencing the course of history in this department on the continent. As a matter of fact it was not completely true that Clavier music had been neglected altogether. For in France they had begun to bestow attention upon it before Kuhnau took it up. There were several composers who cultivated this branch of art with some success. Such as ~~the court~~ ~~cembalist~~ Jacques Champion or Chambonnières who was court cembalist to

Couperin.

Fountain heads.

Luzzachi .

Andrea Gabrieli. 1510 d.1586.

Giovanni 1559 – 1615.

Schutz. Coreggio 1533-1604.

Verini(?) 1566...Sonatas

Louis XIV. He published chamber music in 1670 which is very artistic and dainty. Rather solid and musicianly. J.H.D'Anglebert another musician attached to the court of Louis XIV published 'Pieces de Clavecin' in 1689, much of which is very good. The most important of this group of composers is Francois Couperin (born 1668 – d.1733) the head of the French School of Clavecinists, who by his eminence won the name of Francois Legrand and many of his dainty little works are alive still and have the very distinguished honour of being edited by Brahms. He belonged to a family of distinguished musicians who were mostly organists in Paris, he was born in 1668, became organist of St Gervais in 1698 and in 1701 "Claveciniste de la chamber du Roi". His works were exclusively for the Harpsichord, and there are but few of them, but they are so characteristic and so artistically finished that they stand quite by themselves among the works for the domestic keyed instrument of that time. They were mostly in the form of Suites, which he called *Ordres*. And they for the most part began with the recognized group of

The antecedents of Bach's Organ works.

Girolamo Frescobaldi may fairly stand at the head. Born Ferrara 1583. Pupil of Luzzaschi. At Antwerp in 1608(?) returned to Italy that year and was appointed Organist of St Peters in Rome. His reputation huge. Legend puts one of his audiences at 30,000. Retired for a while to Florence. Reappointed at Rome 1633-1643. Froberger became his pupil 1637-1641. F died in 1667. Ricercari, Toccatas, Canzonas, Capriccios. He was the Southern representative of that branch of Art.

In the North at Amsterdam there was an Organist of almost equal importance in the person of Jan Pieterzoon Sweelinck, who was born at Deventer in 1562. The exact date of his appointment at the Old Church at Amsterdam is not known. But he occupied that position ~~from~~ at all events from 1581 till his death in 1621. He is a very interesting and enterprising composer, and wrote psalms and motetts and Cantiones Sacrae for voices, and his organ music is especially important. He came nearer to writing an effective Organ fugue than almost anyone else of his time.

With him must be coupled Samuel Scheidt, the foremost German Organist of his time, who was born at Halle in 1587. He was a pupil of Sweelinck at Amsterdam in 1605. His Organ works are of great importance in history as he did a great deal to develop Organ style – and he was among the first

movements – The Allemande, Courante and Sarabande, and then provided it with a lot of little fancy movements of the type of ballet movements in Operas. He was especially happy in such delicate little fancy movements, and thus early illustrated the taste of the French for writing what may be called ‘picture tunes’, rather than writing self dependent movements whose interest centres like Sonatas and Suites of the Bach order in their intrinsic artistic qualities. We come across such titles as ‘the bees’, ‘the enchantress’, ‘the butterflies’ – ‘tender langours’, ‘La Gazouillement’, ‘the seductive lady’, ‘the wood dwellers’ and so on. Chrysander in the preface to the modern edition which he joined with Brahms in editing as “the first great composer for the harpsichord known in the history of music”. Most of the other composers for the Harpsichord who preceded him wrote for the Harpsichord and the Organ in mind to the same style, but he of all others especially excelled in finding the true style appropriate to the Harpsichord. The four books of Clavecin pieces came out in 1713, 1716, 1722 and 1730. One of his most important works is the “Art of playing the Clavecin” (1717) which gives exact details of the ways of dealing with all the copious ornaments then in vogue, and the

Corelli. Archangelo. Born at Fusignano Imola(?) Feb 13. 1653. Learnt violin from Bassani. Early history obscure. Went to Germany. ~~Settled in Rome 1685~~ Published his first set of Sonatas in Rome 1683 and settled there in 1685. Friend of Cardinal Ottoboni and much appreciated in Roman Society. He conducted the Cardinal's Services Musicales and played at them. His compositions gained great vogue in all countries – and they are the earliest works of their kind which have kept alive till the present day unless we count Purcell's first set of Sonatas of three parts which were printed in the same year 1683 as Corelli's.

Corelli's ~~other~~ ~~greater~~ (?) contributions to the new (?) branch of Art which he illustrated in 12 Sonate a tre e basso 1683, 12 Sonate da camera 1685, 12 Sonate a tre con archliute 1689, 12 Sonate da camera 1694, 12 Sonate for violin solo and bass 1700, and the Concerti Grossi 1712. A very small output but surprisingly balanced in style and intrinsic qualities for the time when they were written. There's an air of distinction about them all, never trivial. He was evidently not a brilliant player but a very authentic(?) and musical one. Antonio Vivaldi a very different sort of composer from Corelli – went in much more for effects – and was a virtuoso. Not known when born – in latter half of the 17th century, possibly at Venice. Went to Germany for a while, but settled down in Venice in 1713 where he was Maestro of the Concerts of the Ospedale de la Pieta till his death in 1743. (It was a foundling hospital for girls and the girls themselves composed the Choir and Band so it is said.) A very masterly composer in his way, but not so interesting as Corelli. Did a great deal to develop the technique of the violin. With concertos xxx of the old type.

way to deal with refinement of phrasing etc. He died in 1733. We can't leave this branch of the subject without referring to the works of the famous German Organist Pachelbel who was born even earlier than Couperin – and published late in life in 1699 a collection of Themes and Variations called the Hexachordion Apollinis and several suites which are for the most part curiously Italian in style, and anticipate flimsy in detail. He affords examples of formulas of accompaniment of a cheap description, like the so called 'Alberti Bass' - died 1709. There is still another very interesting figure personality who comes as it were between the characteristic work of the 17th century and the definite appearance of Bach and Handel – who indeed stands somewhat by himself. This is Reinhard Keiser who was the first man to make any mark as a composer of the German Opera as a definitely national product. He was born in 1674, and is said to have produced his first Opera Basilius in 1693 in Brussels. In 1694 he came to Hamburg, and there the great part of his career was spent. Hamburg enjoyed the distinction of having and important theatre from

The descent of Joachim and Arbos, Arbos's pupils.

Corelli.

Somis 1676.

Pugnani 1727.

Viotti ~~1774~~ 1753.

Rode 1774.

Böhm 1795.

Joachim 1831.

Arbos 1863.

Devin(?)

Keiser was dealt with in connection to Handel

1678. The Hamburgers were emphatically German and independent and it was natural that the first essays in German Opera should be made there – and it was for the Hamburg theatre that Keiser wrote most of his Operas. Which are computed to number over 100. (116 thereabouts). Their special prominence lies in their not being mere imitations of Italian style which was beginning to dominate all Opera houses throughout the world. But he had also great merits, as his work is very tuneful and very vivacious. And he goes in sometimes for more colour in his orchestral accompaniments than the Italian Opera composers cared to attempt. His ballet movements were also sprightly and engaging. Handel began his professional career as a 2nd violin in them as an accompanist in Keiser's theatre in 1703. But except in so far as Keiser generally furthered the establishment of a genuine ~~style~~ German style traces of the influence of which are to be found in J.S.Bach he is quite isolated, as Germany after his time became associated by the Italian Opera; and the efforts to maintain an

Dealt with in connection with Handel

As his sphere of operations is so much wider than Handel's and his work summed up so many more branches of art.

independent German style was very feeble. Being mainly confined to little Singspielen, which were plays with songs interspersed, such as those of Adam Hiller and Dittersdorf later on. Keiser's works are now difficult of attainment and even the names of most of them are forgotten. But we have a fair number of excerpts from Circe, Pomona, Dionysus(?), Claudius, Diana and Endymion, Adonis etc and they all ring of a German characteristic personality. Handel and J.S.B. were born in the same year 1685, and very near each other. Handel on Feb.23 and Bach probably on March 21. It is not known for certain but it must have been within a day or two – ~~we can't discuss them together as their careers were so completely diverse – so we may as well discuss J.S.B. first.~~ Everything conspired to make him strongly representative of German qualities – He came of a family of distinguished German musicians, whose careers had all been spent in the North of Germany such as Erfurt, Eisenach and Muhlhausen. Towns of Thuringia. At one time the Bachs were so numerous in Erfurt that the town pipers

Hans of Weimar –

Veit –

Hans der Spielmann d.1626 –

Christoph 1613-1661 –

Johann Christoph 45-93 – John Ambrosius 1645-
1695 –

Johann Christoph 1671-1721 – John Sebastian.

Heinrich Arnstadt(?) - J.Christoph, J.Michael – Maria
Barbara.

were known as “the Bachs”. The earliest to whom their ancestry is traced was Veit Bach who was born about 1560 and died 1619, who appears to have been born at Erfurt, wandered to Hungary and back, was a miller of musical disposition and played on the zither. His son Hans 1580-1626 (der Spielmann, an entrepreneur of jovial disposition) the great Grandfather of J.S.B. was the first recorded professional musician of the family and from him the clan spread out into various branches all claiming distinguished musicians – of whom most noteworthy were Johann Christoph and John Michael who were sons of Heinrich (1615-1692) son of Hans, J.S.B.’s uncles. His father was Ambrosius born 1645 son of John Christoph son of Hans who was a town musician of Erfurt. He played on a stringed instrument possibly the violin, and J.S.B. imbibed a musical atmosphere from the first, in the simple domesticity of a German family, which was a large one, as he had a lot of brothers all older than himself. The Bach’s were given to having large families. It is always supposed that his father being a violin player gave him his first inklings of that instrument, and it is curious to note parenthetically that his first professional appointment (as it was Handel’s) was that of a violinist in the private band of Prince Johann Ernst of Saxony at Weimar when he was 18. But his father’s influence soon came to an end, for he died when he was ten – and as his mother had died

Reincken John Adam. Born 1623 in Deventer in Holland – was suborganist at Hamburg from 1658. Organist from 1663 and died there 1722 aged 99.

The Hofkapelle at Celle was near, where French musicians were employed and much French Music played.

in the previous year he was left an orphan. He was then taken charge of by an elder brother Johann Christoph 1671-1721 who was Organist at Ohrdruff and a pupil of the famous Organist and composer Johann Pachelbel. And under these circumstances he began to develop his knowledge and abilities as an Organist, and to show his musical ardour very early. It is illustrated by the familiar legend that his brother having found him engrossed in the study of a volume of organ music by the most famous Organists up to that time, for some reason took it away from him; and locked it up in a cupboard, with a lattice wire on its front. And that the young John Sebastian managed to get it out through the wires and did his eyesight serious harm by copying it by moonlight to avoid discovery. He showed his ardour also in a characteristic fashion when he was sent to school at Lüneburg as a chorister, from which place he trudged over 100 miles to hear the famous old organist J.A. Reincken play on his Organ at Hamburg. Reincken was a representative of the Northern German Organists, whose musical ancestry came from Sweelinck (he succeeded Scheidemann); and no doubt one of the finest performers of the time. Bach went to hear him several times. His first post as an organist was at Arnstadt a place in the same district as his birthplace – and from there higher up his appointment as

[Blank page]

violinist in the Duke of Saxony's little band in 1703. While he was at this post he was taken with the idea going to hear and observe the famous old Danish Organist and composer Dietrich Buxtehude, and became so engrossed in his observations that he overstayed his leave from the Church authorities to the extent of 3 months and got into trouble with them. But there can be no doubt that the world is a gainer? ~~(as the influence of Buxtehude upon him became of the strongest and he could not have had a better model).~~ For Buxtehude was one of the most interesting composers of that time, full of character and fancy, and gifted with the finest instinct for organ effects and style of any man except J.S.B. himself. It is thought also that he may have had the opportunity while at Lübeck of hearing the Church musical functions which took place at Advent(?) which were at that time about the best in Germany – consisting of the performances of Church Cantatas with Soloists Choir and Orchestra, as well as performances by Buxtehude himself. And there can be no mistake that the influence of that composer is not only discernible in J.S.B's organ music, but in his choral

Spitta conjecturally puts the Capriccio on the absence of a beloved brother in 1704. He is probably wrong, but at all events it must have been written (almost certainly) before 1709, and that was the date of Pultava, and it is most improbable that it was written after that date. There is nothing to show when John Jakob entered the service of Charles XII as a military Hautboy player. Charles XII started for Poland in the final portion(?) of his invasion in 1707, it is not likely Bach wrote the Capriccio before that, or on the verge of it. So at any rate there are some grounds for considering that the work as being done(?) and indeed for attributing it to the Arnstadt time which ended in 1709. ~~Apart from the fact that there is~~ Intrinsically there is not much to be gained from it. For though there is no other example of a programme written by JSB, it does not prove that it is a very early work. He made many experiments late in life – more so the glibness and certainty of it all suggests much more experience and growth of mastery than might be expected of him at the Arnstadt time.

works as well – especially in his Church Cantatas – we do not know how early he began to use his power as a composer. But there is sufficient evidence to show that he wrote his first Church Cantata while at Arnstadt. ~~The Church Cantata~~ “Denn du wirst nicht meine Seele in der Hölle lassen” in its earliest form no doubt dates from that time. But unfortunately we have not got the original version, but as a revised later version. But in this there are traces of immature workmanship – such as the long runs in the solos, which are like similar features in the works of the ~~earlier~~ German Composers of the previous generation, like Ahler and Tunder, and were imitated from the Italians. Some small quantity of organ music is also attributed to the time on account of the immaturity. J.S.B. was not altogether happy in his relations with the church authorities and they were angry at his stopping away so long at Lübeck and there was a good many other things they were displeased about. He was had up before the consistory and severely questioned, and the questions and answers are still in existence – one of the few

See Spitta 1.329 (Engl edit.) for an example of the
hopeless docility(?) in which the author numbers his
historical points.

and the prelude and extremely brilliant fugue in D major, which is the delight of all organists with any claim to virtuosity; and is notable for its close resemblance in many features to a fine fugue of Buxtehude's. Several of the best known Cantatas also belong to this time such as the most interesting Cantata "Gottes Zeit ist die Allebeste Zeit" well known in the country by the name of "God's time is the best time". It was evidently written for some funeral, and was concerned with the idealization of death as a mystery lighted up by the consolation of confident hope in Christ, which to Germans of that time had a curiously intimate personal significance. Another Cantata perhaps the most favoured in the country is that known here by the name of 'My Spirit is in heaviness'. Full of poetic feeling and tenderness and intimate devotion. His genius at the time blossomed out in all the warmth of youth; and though he may not have attained to the supreme mastery of his later years, in no works is his human feeling more conspicuous. These early cantatas are more imbued with intense devotional(?) spirit than later works, when he had assimilated all that was best in Italian artistic procedure. Another fine Cantata, which is known to belong to the year 1714, through the autograph score in the Berlin Library having the date written on it in his own hand, is the big Cantata "Nun komm der Heiden Heiland". In which he begins to show his growing cosmopolitanism. As it begins with an Overture in what is known as the French form, and contains many arias on the Italian lines with Dialogues(?)

Bach's journey to Cassel in 1714 should be also noted. He is said to have gone there, possibly through the mediation of the Crown Prince Friedrich, to perform on the restored Organ. On this occasion the story is told that he performed privately to the Crown Prince – See Spitta 1.514

Bach cannot have entered upon his duties at Coethen ~~before the last~~ before November or December in 1717 as he was on duty at a Festival in Weimar up to Nov 2. See 1.586. The Prince of Coethen however, for reasons we have no means of being sure of, paid the salary as from Aug 1, 1717.

undoubtedly(?) very much in the same style as passages he would write for the organ, and the double stopping by which he tries to suggest grand successions of harmonies are rather forced upon the violins. Splendid as they are they are quite on the ultimate verge of what is possible both to the character and technique of such as instruments as the violin and the cello, which are driving(?) single part instruments. The most striking illustration is the famous Chaconne which is from one of the solo violin suites, and really achieves the ultimate that is possible for a violin solo. He was driven to such treatment through writing for the violin alone. In the Sonatas for Violin and Clavier we do not come across so much double stopping, or such attempts to make the violin deal with successions of harmonies; and even contrapuntal passages.

[Blank page]

The suite for orchestra and the superb Brandenburg Concertos also belong to this time. The former represents the greatest examples of works for orchestra in the old form of Sonatas – with Fugal movements and such dance movements as Gavottes, Bourées, Passepieds and the like, which do not appear in modern Symphonies – but rather in the typical Suites – and the works are always more definitely contrapuntal in texture than modern Orchestral works, and again have very much the flavour of the Organ style.

The Brandenburg Concertos are specially interesting as examples in all manner of strange combinations of instruments. They were written for an enthusiastic lover of music the Margraf of Brandenburg who had asked him to write them for him

Take here Anna Magdalena's book p.27 and the French Suites, 5 of which are in this book. ~~The French Suites are in the Notenbüche of 1725.~~ These refer to the "Little Organ Book". – Divinely beautiful arrangement of Chorales - the second of Anna Magdalena's books was brought together in 1725 at Leipzig. 2 Clavier Partitas, 2 French Suites.

What is most notable about them is that ~~they~~ each of the six is a kind of speculation in different groups of Orchestral Instruments. The first for 2 horns, 3 oboes, bassoon viola and strings and continuo. The 2nd for Trumpet, Flute Hautboy and solo violin with strings. The 3rd for 3 violins, 3 violas and 3 cellos. The fourth for solo violin, 2 flutes a bec and strings. The 5th for solo Klavier, Flute and violin and strings and the 6th for 2 violins 2 gambas, cello and continuo. They are mostly on the lines of the Italian type of Concerto. Very elaborate in instrumental Counterpoint and ornament; ~~with~~ and in several cases with elaborate solo parts. Here the Orchestral Suites = Overtures. The most important event of the Coethen time was the bringing together of the collection of the first part of the

The mystery of scale. If a series of fifths is tuned up, each perfect, a note slightly higher than the ostensible note would be arrived at. So to avoid this each fifth has to be tuned a little flat. The Pythagorean third which is arrived at by tuning from perfect fifths is considerably sharper than what you may call the natural term(?) third, the ratio of which is as 4 to 5.

“Wohltemperiertes Clavier” – the first 24 Preludes and Fugues of the famous 48. It is quite clear that the components of this supreme collection must have been completed mainly independently – but that he was moved to bring them together and complete a set to be a sort of profession of faith in connection with the tuning of our scale. The older music especially Choral Music had not required to use many keys and men were content to have but few keys in tune as long as free modulation was not necessary. But the growth of instrumental music made it necessary to all keys, and Bach’s practical insights led him to be the foremost champion of equal temperament. These works were collected under the title of --- Spitta 2/ p. 162. Nearly all seem to have been written at Coethen.

[Blank page]

Old Johann Kuhnau died in June 1722 and his post as Cantor of the Thomas Schule at Leipzig, and Capellmeister of the Churches of St Thomas and St Nicholas became vacant. Things had not been so sympathetic at Coethen for J.S.B after the Prince married again – as his second wife was not a lover of music so Bach entered for the vacant post. Among his rivals were Telemann, Rolle and Fasch. All musicians of eminence - He went to Leipzig in February 1723 and performed and conducted a Cantata – and was selected and installed on May 31. The Cantor's duties were peculiar. The famous St Thomas School existed mainly for the purpose of providing singers for the Church Musical functions, but it provided also for their general education, and J.S.B. was called upon by the regulations of the establishment to give lessons in elementary Latin as well as Music. A duty which he accepted, with assistance of a

[Blank page]

Prefect. Apart from this his duties were not exactly that of an ordinary Organist. He had to preside generally over the Music, which was on a liberal scale both at St Thomas Church and at St Nicholas. ~~They~~ It included the performance every Sunday of a Cantata and a Motett at the churches alternately. And this is the explanation of the enormous number of his later church Cantatas, and also for some of them being rather dry – as he evidently poured them out as occasion required. He also had to direct the music on all special occasions such as weddings and funerals and to rehearse the choir and train them at regular stated times every week – a business which he seems to have found rather tiresome – as the boys had got rather out of hand and were often very troublesome. However J.S.B. worked hard to arrive at a satisfactory state of things, and at all events provided music which required a high level of performance, and conceded(?) to it.

[Blank page]

But all this is but a side issue in his life, as we are mainly concerned with his musical achievements, and in respect of them his time at Leipzig is supremely important as his level by the time he went there arrived at the full maturity of his powers. The first work of importance which he produced at Leipzig apart from the Cantatas was the great Magnificat, which probably had its first hearing in 1723 – a great and noble work for Orchestra, Choir of 5 pts and Soloists. Next in order came the famous St John Passion which was performed on Good Friday 1724. This was his first work in the form. The history and purpose of what is called Passion Music has been discussed before. Practically it is as follows. The tradition of performing Passion Music in holy week was very ancient. It had been the custom of the Roman Church to give point to the Gospel Narrative by distributing the parts of the Evangelist and the various actors in the story, Peter, Judas, Pontius Pilate and so on to various

[Blank page]

members of the choir, and to use the choir as a body for the utterance of groups of people – such as the Jews, disciples, Pharisees etc, and in this sense the Choir as body were technically called the Turba or Crowd. At first the music had been very simple and archaic – but the form grew and expanded, and by degrees solos were introduced commenting on the events of the story – and Chorales – till by Bach's time it had become a very extensive and composite work of Art. Of this form J.S.B's are by far the highest and richest examples. As it was eminently in form suited to his earnest and poetic disposition. Bach is supposed to have made 5 settings of the 'Passion', but of these two are lost and one is doubtful. The only ones that remain without doubt are the St John Passion we have already mentioned and the St Matthew Passion. There is a St Luke Passion in existence which is thought might be by him. Of the

[Blank page]

St Mark Passion which is lost it is supposed that a great part of a Trauer ode is made up (Mourning Ode) which Bach wrote for the mourning celebration for the death of Queen Christiana of Poland in 1726. The greatest of the Passions and one of the most deeply interesting in existence is the Matthew Passion which Bach produced in its first form on Good Friday April 15 1729. The first version is not the one the world knows so well in modern times – as J.S.B re-wrote it, after his frequent way, and produced it in the extended and amended form in 1740. To all intents it is the last word in the Passion form – with its great Choruses and pathetically harmonized Chorales,

[Blank page]

and the number of deeply moving Arias. The ideal which the human mind had been groping for through centuries is herein formed – The story being told by the Evangelist, and the various characters and the “turba” each taking the words allotted to them, and the solo Arias and the Choruses being introduced as commentaries on the successive situations, dwelling on them and expanding them, and as it were making the minds of the congregation dwell upon them – in which service the solo voices are often joined by the Chorus. While the Chorales, which are introduced at all crucial points introduce make the congregation also take their part in the proceedings. The Matthew Passion has a curious history – For though yearly performed at Leipzig little notice was taken of it elsewhere. It was revised in 1829 in Germany by Mendelssohn. And it was never heard in England – at all till late in the next century (1859?) 1854. When it was performed under the auspices of Sterndale Bennett.

Another important work which belongs to the same period is the

[Blank page]

~~Christmas~~ the work known as the Christmas Oratorio – which is really 6 important Cantatas joined together. Severally written for Christmas day, New Year's day and New Year Sunday. It was ~~written~~ produced in 1734. A good deal of the music was transferred from earlier works, mostly secular. Bach also produced an Eastertide Oratorio about this time. The next great work we come to is the famous B Minor Mass one of the greatest choral works in existence.

The history of its composition is rather peculiar – as it was evidently the bringing together of various movements written at different times. The Credo was probably written in 1731 or 1732. The Kyrie and Christe eleison probably in 1733. At all events it was in a more or less complete form in the latter year; and Bach took the opportunity of ingratiating

[Blank page]

himself with a new King of Poland and the Duke of Saxony, who was now his head, by presenting the work to him at Dresden. But it evidently was not completed then in the form now known as the great Sanctus was probably not written till some years later. Possibly between 1735 and 1737. Some of the rest of the work was drawn from other sources – as for instance the famous ~~Agnus Dei~~ wonderful Crucifixus which is taken from a Cantata “Weinen, Klagen, Sorgen” – and much of the “Agnus Dei” is taken from the Ascension Oratorio. The Osanna is from a secular Cantata “Preise dem Glücke”. But in any case the result is supreme, and the material thoroughly assimilated. It is on too big a scale to be literally used in the service of the Mass – But it stands independently of this connection as one of the sublimest

[Blank page]

examples of deep and religious noble feeling ever produced by man. Bach was constantly occupied in pouring out Church Cantatas for all the latter part of his life; but they are so numerous that we cannot consider them in detail. We have only to consider the remaining important works of the latter part of his life. Among them are the delightful Concertos for Clavier and 2 and 3 Claviers in combination with Orchestral accompaniment. The group of six Suites known as the English Suites which are on a much grander and more imposing scale than the earlier French Suites of the Coethen period though on the same lines. They differ mainly in plan by having grandly developed Preludes in each case. Their history is not known, but they are supposed to (have) been written about 1727. The group of Partitas which are Suites of somewhat irregular form, ~~belong to about 1734~~ began to be published then in 1727 – To the same period as the Partitas belongs the supremely astonishing work the 30 Goldberg Variations, which were on a

[Blank page]

Sarabande which made its first appearance in one of Anna Magdalena's Clavier books – in which it appears in her handwriting. A great many of the variations are in canon at every interval from the 2nd to the 9th introduced with such marvellous facility and skill that the hearer is quite unaware of the presence of such a device. And the whole ends up with a 'Quodlibet' which is a combination of folk tunes, going on simultaneously in different parts. Of the date of another important Clavier work the Chromatic Fantasia and Fugue it seems impossible to make any certainty. It may even have been written before the Leipzig period. ~~It is~~ The fantasia is notable as an experiment in rhapsodical recitative for the Clavier – and one of the most interesting works for the instrument in existence. Bach's other important works for the Clavier such as the Toccatas and Fugues we can do no more than mention. We remain also more or less in the dark with the second half of the Wohltemperierte

The Organ works.

G minor well known in 1725.

Possibly 1720.

Leipzig B minor Fugue.

E min,

E flat,

C major.

Clavier, the additional collection of 24 Preludes and Fugues which made up the complete 48 as we know it. We only know that it belonged to the latter part of his life. The collection, which like the first half may have been made up of various movements written at various times was possibly completed by 1740, certainly not later than 1744. There is no copy in existence in Bach's own handwriting. But also certainly with a great deal of his most famous organ works in the Leipzig period – Probably not only Preludes, Toccatas and Fugues, but also the lovely examples of the Teutonic(?) form of art I have so often referred to the Chorale Vorspiele. A kind of close-knit fantasia on Chorale tunes.

Of Bach's life at Leipzig we do not know much. He was as I have said occasionally in difficulties with the Church Authorities owing to the difficulty in managing the boys in his choir. He was more successful in training a superb number of pupils such as Krebs, Scheider, Kirnberger

One of the most conspicuous events at the end of his life was his invite to Frederick The Great at Potsdam. Philip Emmanuel had been made Capellmeister and accompanist at the Court and this led to J S being invited to visit the Court. And he accepted the invitation after some hesitation in May 1747. P.231

Musikalisches Opfer p.234

Altnikol, who married one of his daughters, and his own distinguished son C. Philip Emmanuel. All musicians of sound and honourable character, who showed the influence of his inspiring personality. His home circle was a happy and congenial one and they were fond of having sorts of family concerts at home. His eyes began to fail him as he grew older and in 1749 he had to decide to submit to an operation, which was done by an English Oculist of repute living in Leipzig. The operation was a failure and he became completely blind. The effects broke his health completely and he died on July 28 1750, having dictated one last Chorale Vorspiel to his son in law Altnikol, on his death bed to the Chorale "Lord when we are in direst need". It is sad to think that he left no will and so little property that his wife Anna Magdalena fell into poverty and ended her life as an Alms woman in 1760.

O Mensch beweine 10, Chaconne 11, Title page of Wohltemperierte 12, title page of little Clavecin book 17, Anna's writing of 1st Prelude 47, 1st page of Matthew 58.

Bach's life is quite uneventful. ~~He never tried~~ It is almost as difficult to get any idea of the tenor of it apart from the music as it is of Shakespeare. He never moved from one little part of Germany and never came before any large audiences. His works were performed merely by Church Choirs, and all the incidents of an artist's life which tried to produce self-consciousness and love of display were absent. He lived to cultivate his own lofty ideals of Art without hindrance or distraction, and the result is a mass of work which for sincerity and depth of feeling is without equal in history. And the longer the world goes on the greater becomes the hold of his music and the greater the force of the example of ~~the~~ his musical personality.

[Blank page]

[Blank page]

[Blank page]

[Back cover]